

## MEDIA RELEASE

### School scholarships identify best of the best

**21 January 2015:** With the new school year just around the corner, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has reminded parents of students seeking a scholarship that applications for the 2016 school year are closing soon.

For more than 50 years, schools around Australia have been using ACER Scholarship Tests to assist in identifying academically able students for the award of a scholarship. The tests are designed to rank students by finely differentiating at the top end of the performance spectrum.

“Scholarship tests have to be challenging because they need to identify the best of the best,” the manager of ACER’s school assessment services, Ms Barbara Smith, said.

In research conducted between 2004 and 2013 that tracked the performance of more than 2100 students who were awarded a scholarship at Year 7, the median Year 12 result achieved by those same students was 98.1, representing the top 1.9 per cent of all Year 12 students.

“The skills that ACER Scholarship Tests examine are developed over the child’s lifetime both in and out of school. As such students do not need an extensive period of test preparation or coaching to perform well,” Ms Smith said.

Ms Smith said ACER Scholarship Tests require students to demonstrate a range of skills such as the ability to interpret, infer, deduce and think critically. The tests are not curriculum based and do not test the ability to retrieve learned knowledge. Students are presented with a stimulus, such as a passage of text, cartoon, table, graph or diagram, and then need to apply their thinking and problem solving skills. The writing tasks assess students’ expression of ideas, and the organisation and cohesion of their writing, rather than simply spelling, grammar and punctuation.

“The best preparation for the tests is for the student to read widely and engage regularly in activities that help stimulate critical thinking. Close to the scholarship test date, it is also useful for applicants to become familiar with the test structure and content style so that they know what to expect on test day,” Ms Smith said.

More than 12 000 students in around 220 schools will sit an ACER scholarship test this year. Of these, more than 80 schools have elected to be part of a cooperative program in which approximately 4500 students sit the test on the same test date. Students are able to apply for scholarships at more than one school and the test results are forwarded to each nominated school.

The next cooperative test, for scholarships commencing in 2016, will be held on Saturday 28 February 2015. Applications to sit the test close at 11.59pm AEDT on 9 February 2015.

For further information visit < [www.acer.edu.au/scholarship/](http://www.acer.edu.au/scholarship/) >

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